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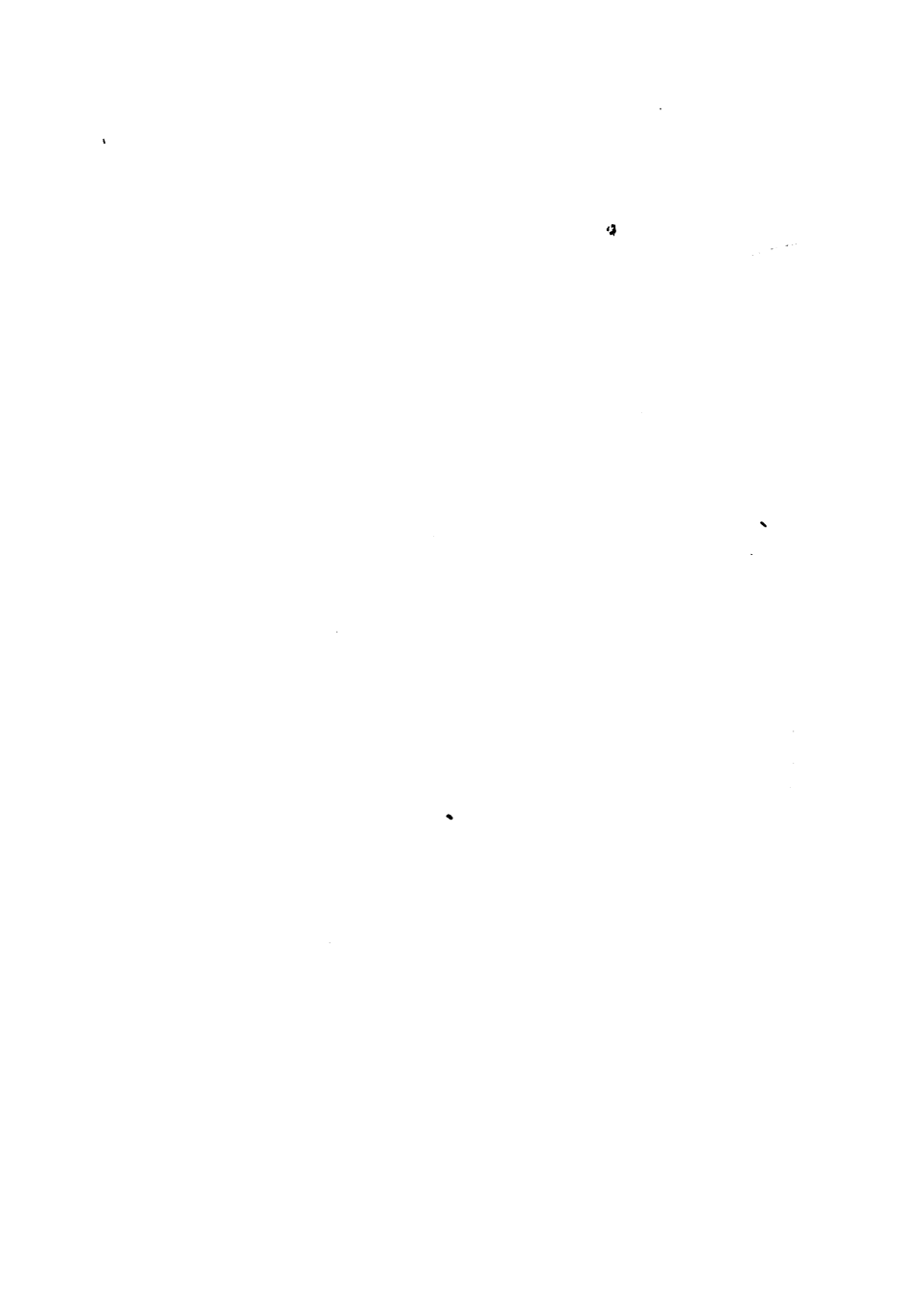
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ESSAY

ON BAPTISM;

SHewing THAT

THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT,

AND

NOT WITH WATER,

IS THE

TRUE CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

BY ENOCH LEWIS.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."—*Colos. ii. 8.*

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ESSAY
ON
BAPTISM.

THE subject of baptism has, of latter time, excited an unusual share of attention among the professors of the Christian name. The Society of Friends, by the rejection of *water* baptism, are generally supposed to have insulated themselves from nearly the whole Christian world. So momentous indeed does this rejection appear in the view of many Christian professors, that they are ready to unchristianize the society on that account. They can scarcely suppose that a community who disregard what they consider so obvious an ordinance, as that of baptism by water, can believe in the truth and importance of the holy scriptures. A little attention, however, to the subject will evince, that Friends have been adjudged to deny the holy scriptures, because they give to some portions of the sacred volume, a different construction from that which some other professors adopt. To be condemned

on that principle, is not new. The Pharisees condemned the Saviour himself by a similar argument. "We know that this man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath." (John ix. 16.) They believed that God spake to Moses, and hence they fairly inferred that his injunctions were obligatory on them. But our Saviour did not obey those injunctions according to the sense which they gave them. If the argument was unsound then, an argument founded on correspondent principles cannot be conclusive now. And before we admit that the practice of Friends, in relation to water baptism, furnishes any ground for a charge of denying or undervaluing the scriptures, it may be well to inquire, soberly and carefully, whether the opinion that water baptism constitutes an essential part of the Christian system, is in reality a scripture doctrine.

In the first place it may be observed, that the practice of immersion, or bathing in water, was a Jewish ceremony. Moses, on several occasions, enjoined the people to wash their clothes, and bathe their flesh in water. Thus in the fifteenth chapter of Leviticus, a number of cases are mentioned, in which the people were required to wash their clothes and bathe themselves in water. And, chap. 16, it is prescribed that the man who let the scape-goat go into the wilderness, and he that burned the skins and

flesh of the sin-offering, should wash their clothes, and bath their flesh in water, before they came into the camp. Again, he that eateth that which dieth of itself, or is torn of beasts, shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water. But if he wash them not, nor bathe his flesh, he shall bear his iniquity. Also when the water of separation was about to be prepared, the priest, having performed his part of the process, was to wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water. He also that burned the heifer, was required to wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water. (Numb. xix. 7, 8.) To the washings required by the precepts of Moses, others were added by the Rabbins, and afterwards observed as traditions of the elders. (Mark vii. 4, 5.) Now it is remarkable, that the Apostle to the Hebrews, referring to these *divers washings*, which were observed under the law, calls them baptisms, βαπτισμοί. (Heb. ix. 10.) And the evangelists Mark and Luke, speaking of the washings required by their traditions, use corresponding words.

As the word baptize, in the Greek βαπτίζω signifies to dip or immerse, it is not strange that we should frequently meet with this word when reference is made to a practice which was so prevalent among the Jews. But the word not occurring in our translation of the Old Testament, the hasty and superficial reader, is apt to

suppose, when he finds it in the beginning of the New, that the practice to which it applies, was then first introduced. This, however, we perceive, was not the case. But the Jewish practice of immersion, to which the baptism of John bears a remarkable analogy, was the *dipping on conversion*. And that practice itself was evidently borrowed from the law of Moses. When the law was about to be given to the Israelites, Moses was commanded to sanctify the people on that day and the next, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day, to behold the manifestations of Almighty power, by which the law was introduced. Moses accordingly went down to the people and sanctified them, and they washed their clothes. (Exodus, xix. 14.) Although the clothes only are mentioned in this place, yet in other places, when, on less solemn occasions, they were directed to wash their clothes, they were commanded to bathe themselves also in water; hence it is probable that this washing was applied to their persons, as well as their clothes. Such is, at least, the traditional construction put upon this passage by the Rabbinical writers. They further assert that this was a *baptism of conversion*; because the people were then to be subjected to a better and purer law than they had previously acknowledged.

Hence, according to the Jewish writers, arose

the baptism of proselytes, or of those Gentiles who were converted to the Jewish religion. In their account of the process, Maimonides and other Rabbinical writers state, that after diligent inquiry respecting the motive of the applicant, they tested his sincerity by impressing upon him the strictness and severity of their law; and when satisfied of the purity of his intentions, they placed him in a confluence of waters, again instructed him in the provisions of the law, and after complete immersion and the offering of his sacrifice, he became as a natural Jew, or regenerated person.*

This practice is stated by the Jewish writers to have existed long before the Christian era; and even to have been in use through the different ages, from the time of Moses. There is indeed so striking a resemblance between the Jewish baptism of conversion, and that used by John, and after him by the early Christians, that, if we even reject entirely the testimony of the Jewish authors in regard to the antiquity of the practice, we cannot doubt but that it was one and the same rite, which was performed by them all. It is true that the existence of proselyte baptism prior to the Christian era, has been disputed by some of the learned. The denial however is founded upon negative evidence, the

* Wall on the history of Infant Baptism, page xliii. &c.

silence of the Old Testament, and the ancient uninspired writers among the Jews; but the affirmative of the question rests on the positive testimony of several Jewish authors of later date, and particularly on that of Maimonides, a man of extraordinary understanding and learning. There is nothing strange or incredible in the supposition that the forerunner of our Lord should be divinely required to accompany his ministry by an exterior observance, which was already familiar to the people to whom he was sent. But that he should be commanded to introduce a new ceremony at the time when the Messiah, in whom the types and ceremonies of the former dispensation were to end, was about to appear, is highly improbable. It is also incredible that the Jews should copy their baptism of conversion from John, or the early Christians. Their rejection of our Saviour and hatred of Christianity would present an insuperable barrier to such imitation.

When the time approached in which the types and shadows of the law, and the predictions of the prophets, were to receive their fulfilment, the word of the Lord came to John the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness, and he came into all the country about Jordan preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. (Luke iii. 2, 3.) There was in this ceremony, something peculiarly appropriate to the ministry

of John. As the bathing in water had long been in use among the Jews, as a means of purification from legal pollutions, it was to them, very expressive of the repentance and amendment of life, which it was his mission to proclaim. Being also, among the Jews, an appendage to conversion from heathenism to the Jewish religion, it was well suited to indicate the conversion from the religion of Moses, to the purer and more spiritual religion, to which John's ministry was an introduction.

The previous use of this, or a similar baptism, as an indication of conversion to a better faith, explains the surprise expressed by the Pharisees, when they learned that John was not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that prophet. Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? (John i. 25.) Now although he was sent to baptize with water, it is obvious that the administration of that ceremony was not the primary object of his mission. He preached the *doctrine* of repentance. He exhorted the people to repent, for the kingdom of Heaven was at hand. He taught them to expect the promised Messiah, as then about to appear. (Matt. iii. 2. Mark i. 3.) He explained the baptism which he administered as prefigurative only of that more effectual baptism which Christ himself should introduce. (Matt. iii. 11. Luke iii. 16, 17.)

That the promulgation of the doctrines which John taught, not the baptizing of the people in water, was the great object of his mission, is sufficiently manifest from several passages in the New Testament. When the angel announced his birth to his father Zacharias, he informed him what his character and office should be. He shall be great in the sight of the Lord. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke i. 15—17.) Zacharias himself also declared of this son, that he should be called the prophet of the Highest, for he should go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways. To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins. (Luke i. 76, 77.)

Here we have the great object of his mission clearly explained; but nothing is mentioned of the ceremony which accompanied it. Afterwards we find him apparently fearful that the people who submitted to his baptism might be disposed to look with too much regard upon this ceremony, and too little upon the object of it. "When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you

to flee from the wrath to come ? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance ; and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father, for I say unto you, that God is able, of these stones, to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees ; every tree, therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire ; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner ; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matt. iii. 7—12.) This is further illustrated by a circumstance in the history of our Saviour mentioned by three of the evangelists. (Matt. xxi. 23. Mark xi. 27. Luke xx. 1.) When the priests and elders inquired by what authority he did those things, and who gave him that authority, he told them that in case they would answer a question which he was about to propound, he would tell them by what authority he did those things. He then inquired of them whether the baptism of John was from Heaven, or of men. They evidently understood this question to relate to the testimony of John concerning Christ, and not to his

baptism only; for they concluded that if they should acknowledge its divine origin, he would say, why then did ye not believe him? The question itself, we may observe, when thus understood, if candidly answered, would have led to a solution of the difficulty which the priests and elders appeared desirous of having solved. For John had borne record of him and his mission; had taught the people whence he came and what was the authority by which he acted. (John i. 15—17, 29—34.) The testimony of John, not his baptism merely, showed the character and authority of Christ. Hence we see why the duplicity of the priests and elders deprived them of an answer to their question.

As the legal dispensation was designed to prepare the people for the more glorious one which was to follow, and to lead them to Christ, John, the immediate forerunner of the Messiah, was placed at the head of that dispensation. Christ himself testified that no greater prophet had ever arisen than John the Baptist, (Luke vii. 28;) and that he was a burning and a shining light. (John v. 35.) The evangelist declares that he came for a witness to bear witness of the light, that all men through him (or it) might believe. (John i. 7.) The great object of his ministry, as testified by himself, was that Christ the true light, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, might be manifested

to Israel. (i. 31.) Hence we see that the baptism which he administered, though an accompaniment, was not the great object of his ministry. It was however divinely authorized, and justly held a conspicuous place in his mission. But it may be observed, that this ceremony owed its importance to the mission, not the mission to it. It is also proper to remember, that the ministry of John belonged rather to the dispensation of the law and the prophets than to that of Christ; for the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than John. (Luke vii. 28.) It was an introduction to, not a part of, the Christian dispensation. It is observable that John attributed to himself a character incomparably inferior to that of his Master; and to the baptism which he administered, an office and permanence totally different from that which was to follow. "I indeed baptize with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He must increase, but I must decrease." (Matt. iii. 11. John iii. 30.)

Hence it is obvious that the baptism with water, as administered by John, was not a part of the Christian dispensation. If it now belongs to that dispensation, it must do so because it necessarily promotes the general object of Christianity; or because it has been introduced into the Christian system by divine authority.

Now it certainly will not be asserted that the immersion of the body in water, or any other application of water, has, in itself, any efficacy in purging the sins of the soul. We may call it an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; yet the sign, we must all admit, does not necessarily confer the grace. The visible sign may be where the spiritual grace is not experienced. And surely none will deny that the spiritual grace may be dispensed without the accompaniment of the outward and visible sign. We are therefore thrown upon the latter alternative. Was it introduced into the Christian system by divine authority?

Before I proceed to the examination of this question, a few observations may be premised.

First. The Christian religion was not designed to be a system of ceremonies, but of permanent and universal righteousness, and this effect is to be produced by purifying the heart, by rectifying the springs and principles of action. This is clearly set forth in several parts of the prophetic writings. In the first annunciation of the Messiah, it was declared that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. (Gen. iii. 15.) An expressive figure indicating the destruction of evil in its course. The promise to Abraham, that in him and in his seed all nations should be blessed, (Ibid. xii. 3, and xxii. 18), gives an elevated character of the

Christian dispensation, to which it unquestionably alludes. The declaration of the prophet Isaiah is still more specific. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever." (Isa. ix. 6, 7.) "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots; and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, *and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.* And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. They shall not hurt nor destroy *in all my holy* mountain; for the earth shall be full of the

knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." (Ibid. xi. 1—5, 9.) These are a few of the sublime predictions of the evangelical prophet, relative to the peace, righteousness and perfection of the gospel day.

The prophet Daniel also foretold the office, as well as the time, of the promised Messiah. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, *to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins*, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy." (Chap. ix. 24.)

In the angelic communication to Joseph, previous to the birth of Christ, it was foretold that he should save his people *from* their sins. (Matt. i. 21.) In the admirable synopsis of Christian morality, contained in the sermon on the Mount, we find a vital, heart-felt religion particularly enjoined. A number of the maxims of the law are recited, but followed by declarations which show that the righteousness of the law was to be merged, not destroyed, in the righteousness of the gospel. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Ibid. v. 17, 18.)

As all the types and shadows of the law pointed to our Lord and his dispensation, as their ultimate object, so they found in him and in his dispensation their complete fulfilment. In his personal character, being born under the law, and submitting to all its requisitions, he fulfilled in himself the ceremonial law. And when on the cross, he declared it was finished ; he blotted out the hand writing of the legal ordinances, nailing them to his cross. From thenceforth the obligation of the ceremonial law, with its divers washings, was at an end.

But the righteousness of the Mosaic law is fulfilled in the superior righteousness of the gospel dispensation. And if we suppose any of the legal ceremonies to be included in the righteousness which Christianity effects, we must upon the same principle admit them all.

Second. Our Saviour frequently gave his instructions in figurative language ; and the people to whom he spoke often mistook his meaning, by giving a literal interpretation to his words. When he admonished his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, they thought he was rebuking them for neglecting to provide a proper supply of bread. (Matt. xvi. 6, 7.) When he told Nicodemus that except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God, he was ready to suppose the attainment of salvation impossible, on this condition. (John

iii. 4.) When he informed the woman at Jacob's well, that whosoever drank of the water which he should give him, should never thirst, but it should be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life, she, construing his words literally, desired him to give her that water, that she might not thirst, neither go thither to draw. When he told the Jews they must eat his flesh and drink his blood, they thought his doctrines very absurd ; (John vi. 52 ;) but the absurdity was their own, in giving a literal construction to words which were designed to convey a spiritual meaning. And if we would avoid similar mistakes, it is necessary that we should distinguish the spiritual application of his words from the figures employed. In order that we may clearly understand, and rightly apply to ourselves the sacred truths left upon record by our Lord and his Apostles, it is undoubtedly requisite that we should partake of a portion of the same enlightening spirit by which they spoke. When we attempt to investigate the doctrines of the gospel, it is essential that we remember that the religion of the New Testament is a spiritual one, designed to be of universal extent and permanent duration. Consequently, in assigning a meaning to any passage of doubtful or ambiguous import, we ought always to regard the general tenor of the

Christian dispensation, and never adopt a construction derogatory thereto.

Third. It is observable that the immediate disciples of our Saviour were strongly tinctured with Jewish prejudices, and many of the early converts to Christianity were greatly attached to the Jewish customs. So far was the apostle Peter affected by the narrow prejudices of his nation, that a special revelation was afforded to prepare him to communicate the doctrine of life and salvation to a pious Roman centurion. And when he heard from the lips of Cornelius an account of the vision, with which he had been favoured, the conclusion to which he was brought, appears from his expressions, to have been new to him. "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." (Acts x. 34, 35.) That he did not discover it much sooner can scarcely be explained in any other way than by a reference to these prejudices; for our Lord after his resurrection commanded his disciples to teach or proselyte *all nations*. (Matt. xxviii. 19.) And Peter himself, on the day of Pentecost, announced the effusion of the Holy Ghost, as the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, that the divine spirit should be poured upon *all flesh*. (Acts ii. 17.) Yet he does not appear to have then perceived that this prediction rela-

ted to any people but his own nation. And when Peter was afterwards censured by some of his fellow believers for this visit to the Gentiles, and he in vindication of himself expounded the matter to them; the discovery was evidently new to them, that God had also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. (Ibid. xi. 18.) We find long afterwards that there were at Jerusalem many thousand Jewish converts who were still zealous of the law. Under these circumstances, we may readily perceive, that the practice of those Jewish Christians, apostles as well as others, could scarcely fail of retaining some relicts of the former dispensation. Consequently the existence of a practice among Christians of that day, is not, of itself, an evidence that it constitutes a necessary part of the gospel dispensation.

I now proceed to examine the evidence drawn, or attempted to be drawn, from the New Testament, in support of the hypothesis that water baptism is a part of the Christian dispensation; or was ever introduced into it by divine authority.

The first argument in favour of this hypothesis is drawn from the circumstance, related by three of the evangelists, that our Saviour himself submitted to this baptism. But we are to remember that our Lord, in his personal character, was born under the law, and became subject

to all its requisitions. He submitted to the Jewish rite of circumcision, kept the Jewish feasts, and, as far as appears, conformed to all the rituals of the Mosaic law. Consequently his submission to the baptism of John, no more rendered that baptism a part of his dispensation, than his observance of the Jewish law rendered it obligatory on Christians. But if we advert to the account which Matthew has left, we find the tenor of the narrative opposed to the hypothesis in question. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said, suffer it to be so *now*; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him." (Chap. iii. 13—15.) From this account it is obvious that John did not consider his baptism as a part of the Christian system, and that our Lord submitted to it in conformity with the requisitions of the ceremonial law. For as the apostle to the Hebrews declares, it behoved him to be made in all things like unto his brethren. (Chap. ii. 17.)

A second argument in support of water baptism, has been deduced from our Saviour's declaration to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born of *water* and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John, iii. 5.)

As baptism, or the immersion of the body in

water, is not mentioned in this passage, the supposition that this was what our Lord intended by being born of water, is entirely gratuitous. Certainly no one will soberly affirm, that to be dipped or sprinkled with water, is really and truly to be *born of water*. To give a strictly literal construction to these expressions is impossible. The language is unquestionably figurative. The supposition that water is to be taken in a literal sense, and that baptism with water is intended, would make this passage prove too much. For protestants generally admit that baptism with water is not absolutely necessary to salvation; which this passage thus construed would prove it to be. That this relates to a spiritual birth, is clear from what immediately follows: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. The wind bloweth where it listeth, thou hearest the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

This passage, taken in its figurative sense, conveys a very important and instructive meaning. As at the moment of birth a new principle of vitality is introduced into the animal system, so the soul that is truly renovated and made alive unto God, becomes actuated by a life to which, in its natural and unregenerate state, it was totally a stranger. Thus the Apos-

tle testifies, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Gall. ii. 20.) "The water and the spirit" says Bishop Taylor, "in this place, signify the same thing; and by water is meant the effect of the spirit cleansing and purifying the soul, as appears in the parable of Christ baptising with the spirit and fire."*

A third argument, and the one most insisted on, is drawn from the charge given by our Lord to his disciples, immediately before his ascension. "Go ye therefore teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. xxviii. 19.)

In this charge, no mention is made of water; unless therefore, water is necessarily implied, this passage furnishes no proof that water baptism is a part of the Christian system. I am aware that the advocates of water baptism insist, that *baptising in water* is meant by this injunction. If it had been previously demonstrated that baptism with water was a part of the Christian dispensation, we might fairly conclude that our Saviour had that kind of baptism

*Liberty of Prophesying, p. 231.

in view. But as that point has not been established, it is not correct reasoning to assume it as the basis of an important conclusion. In fact those who deduce from this passage, the conclusion that baptizing in water is a part of the Christian system, actually argue in a circle; though probably without perceiving it. The argument is substantially this:—Baptizing in water is a Christian ordinance, because our Saviour commanded his disciples to baptize all nations. We know that he commanded them to baptize with water, because *water* must be understood in the passage before us. And we know that water must be understood, because baptizing with water is a part of the Christian system. Take away the last assumption, and the whole argument deduced from this passage falls to the ground.

We may perhaps be assisted in arriving at a correct conclusion respecting the meaning of this injunction, by recurring to the commands which our Lord had previously given to his disciples. When he sent the twelve to preach to the people of Israel, he commanded them to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils, (Matt. x. 8.) ; but nothing is said of baptizing. Neither do we find that during his personal continuance on earth, he ever commanded any of those whom he commissioned to preach the gospel, to baptize with water. It

is true that the disciples baptized, but we are informed that he himself did not. (John iii. 22, Ibid. iv. 2.) We may hence fairly infer, that the disciples baptized in imitation of John, and not in consequence of any command from him. For the expression of the evangelist is scarcely reconcileable with the supposition that the act, thus exclusively attributed to the disciples, was done in compliance with his commands. Their ministry before his ascension seems to have been very similar to that of John. A compend of John's testimony is given in these words, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" (Matt. iii. 2,) and the substance of what the disciples were directed to proclaim is given in almost the same words. (Ibid. x. 7.) It was therefore very natural for them, some of whom had been John's disciples, to use the same significant rite. The superiority of their ministry to that of the forerunner, is, however, sufficiently indicated by the power to work miracles, which it appears John did not possess. (John x. 41.) It is therefore not strange that his commission should include an external observance, which they were not commanded to use. Inasmuch then as we do not find that our Saviour had, at any previous time, commanded his disciples to baptize with water, the supposition that water is implied in the charge before us is, at best, gratuitous.

Could it be proved, as it certainly cannot, that baptizing with water was intended by this injunction, it would still fail to establish the doctrine in question. As the baptism upon conversion was a Jewish practice, if our Lord had required his apostles, who were all Jews, to accompany the *conversion* of the nations to the Christian faith, by a rite similar to the Jewish baptism of proselytes, it would not follow that Christians who were educated in that religion, and never professed or held any other faith, must be subjected to this ceremony. As a sign or accompaniment of conversion from one religion to another, it had a meaning which is easily understood. But in relation to those who have always held the same belief, the meaning does not apply; and as administered to children, who are unconscious of any profession of religion, the ceremony appears destitute of meaning.

Other considerations however will show that water was *not* implied.

That the baptism with water was not the baptism of Christ, is clearly shown by various passages in the New Testament. First, by the words of John, already cited. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire, (Matthew iii. 11. Mark i. 7. Luke iii. 16;)

and by the declaration of our Lord himself, "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence," (Acts i. 5), and by several others. The disciples were not required immediately, upon receiving the command in question, to proceed in the execution of their mission, but to wait at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high. (Luke xxiv. 49.) And they did wait, until the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Spirit, was poured out upon them. This was the baptism before spoken of, under the qualifying influence of which they were to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in, or *into* the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. That they did not only teach, but likewise, through the power of the Father, baptize the people into the name, that is, into the spirit and power of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, is evident from various instances. Thus when Peter was preaching to the people at the house of Cornelius, the Holy Ghost fell on them which heard the word. (Acts x. 46.) The apostles Peter and John also prayed for the believers at Samaria, and laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. (Acts viii. 17.) The Holy Ghost was also given to the disciples at Ephesus through the ministry of Paul. (Ibid. xix. 6.)

Now as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is

manifestly the peculiar baptism of Christ, when he commanded his disciples to baptize, without expressly stating what kind of baptism he had in view, a fair and necessary conclusion would be, that he alluded to his own, particularly as he commanded them to tarry at Jerusalem, until they were themselves baptized with the Holy Ghost, before they should attempt to teach and baptize the people. The sentence, go teach, or rather proselyte all nations, baptizing, &c., very well bears the construction, that these acts were to be simultaneous, that the teaching was to be with baptizing power, and such the apostle Paul tells us his teaching was, in the demonstration of the spirit and power. (1 Cor. ii. 4.) "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (Thes. i. 5.)

Such was the teaching of our Lord himself, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (Matt. vii. 29.) And such I conceive has been in a greater or less degree, the teaching of all true gospel ministers from that day to this. As the disciples were to teach, not the doctrines of the preceding dispensation, but those of the Christian religion; to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded, so the baptism which was to attend their ministry, and properly constitute a part of it, was unquestionably, the one true Christian

baptism, and not a copy or an imitation of the baptism of John.

It is supposed by some, and the practice of many of the professors of Christianity, appears to be founded upon the supposition, that the baptism with water, was directed, in the passage before us, to be observed in the Christian church, not as a continuation of John's baptism, but in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that by accompanying the administration of this ceremony, with these words, it ceased to belong to the dispensation of John, but became a part of the dispensation of Christ. As it cannot be maintained, and indeed is not pretended, that the apostles, after our Lord's ascension, performed the act of baptizing with water, in any other way than John did, and they had previously done, it is obvious that the change, if any was made, was not in the baptism itself, but in the words which attended it. The baptism, of course, as far as the water was concerned, was still the baptism of John. If then the disciples baptized their converts with water, in compliance with this command, it is strange that nothing appears in their history to show that they accompanied the act with a declaration that it was done in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Certainly, so important a point as this would appear, upon this view of the subject, would not

have been overlooked by the apostles or their inspired historian. But we do not find in any part of the apostolic history, that they ever used this form of expression. They are said simply to have baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

If we construe this command according to the tenor and spirituality of the Christian religion, we shall adhere more closely to the text, than by adopting the interpretation usually given to it. For as already observed, a command given by our Lord to his disciples, to baptize, must imply, if not otherwise expressed, that he referred to his own baptism. Had any other been intended, it must have been expressed. Besides baptizing with the Holy Spirit, is in reality baptizing into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; which the baptism with water is not. Observing that the *name* must be taken in the sense wherein it is frequently used in scripture, viz. for the spirit and power. (Vide Ps. xx. 5; liv. 1; lxxxix. 24; Prov. xviii. 10; Cant. i. 3; Isa. lii. 6; Acts iv. 7 & 12, x. 43.)

The apostle testifies that as many as were baptized into Christ, had put on Christ. (Gal. iii. 27.) To be baptized into Christ, or into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, has therefore a much deeper, and more spiritual meaning, than being baptized *with water*, whatever form of words may accompany its administration.

It has been urged, with some plausibility, that baptizing with water must be meant by this charge, because baptizing with the Holy Ghost is the peculiar office of Christ, and cannot possibly be performed by man.

This argument has been partly anticipated and answered in the preceding remarks. It is admitted that of themselves, and by any power of their own, they could not baptize with the Holy Spirit. Our Saviour had before told them that without him they could do nothing, (John xv. 5); and now, as if in anticipation of this very objection, he assured them he would be with them to the end of the world. (Matt. xxviii. 20.) When he previously sent the seventy to preach, (Luke x. 1), and commanded them to heal the sick, a command was given which they could not obey by any power of their own. Yet when they returned they testified that even the devils were subject to them through his name. (Ib. x. 17.) And the apostles, after his ascension, could no more heal the sick or perform other miracles, by their own power, than they could baptize with the Holy Spirit. When Peter and John healed the lame man, they expressly disclaimed the credit of having performed this miracle by their own power or holiness, (Acts iii. 12), but testified that it was by the name, that is the power and spirit, of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, that he stood

before them whole. (Ib. iv. 10.) We find the gift of healing was not at their command ; for although Paul healed the cripple at Lystra, (Ib. xiv. 10), and raised the father of Publius from his bed of sickness in Melita, (Ib. xxviii. 8), yet he left his friend Trophimus sick at Miletum. (2 Tim. iv. 20.) He also speaks of Epaphroditus, his friend and companion in labour, as having been sick nigh unto death, and attributes his recovery to the divine mercy and not to any power of healing exercised by himself or others. (Phill. ii. 27.) When divinely authorised and empowered, they could heal the sick or baptize with the Holy Spirit ; but of themselves they could do neither. Hence the necessity of waiting till they were endued with power from on high.

A fourth argument in support of water baptism, is deduced from the circumstance of Peter commanding the family of Cornelius to be baptized, in the name of the Lord, after they had received the Holy Ghost. This fact, as stated by the sacred historian, is fully admitted. But giving it all the authority it can reasonably claim, it proves nothing but a fact. It is obvious that Peter was then deeply tinctured with the prejudices of his nation. Until that time the disciples appear to have thought, that the Gentiles could not be saved. And they certainly did not understand, that the Mosaic law was

not necessary to be observed by them. If it could be proved, as it certainly cannot, that Peter gave this command under an apprehension that baptism with water was to be a standing ordinance in the Christian church, it would be no proof of the correctness of the opinion. The ministry of Peter until that time had manifestly been confined to his own nation. He may have laboured under this relic of Judaism, as well as under others, without being unfitted for the service to which he was called. We find, a number of years after this, the apostle Paul openly rebuking him for compelling the Gentiles to live after the manner of the Jews, (Gal. ii. 14;) which shows that even then, with all his additional experience, his Jewish predilections carried him further than the enlarged and liberal mind of Paul would suffer without rebuke. Inasmuch however as the use of water baptism was then common among these Jewish Christians, it is very probable that its omission would have increased the prejudice which this visit excited among Peter's brethren at Jerusalem. He therefore may be considered as having acted prudently in this case, without our drawing any other conclusion from it.

It may further be observed, that some mode of admitting converts into a community, either civil or religious, must necessarily be adopted, and the first Christians were in the practice of

baptizing their converts with water, as the Jews and John the Baptist had done before, as an indication of their admission into the community of believers. The expression of Peter, "who can forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we," may therefore be fairly construed as implying, that these people, though not belonging to the Jewish nation, from whom their converts had, till then, been obtained, were proper objects of admission into the Christian church. They had received his message, and they were crowned with the gifts of the spirit. They had in fact become Christians. He therefore commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. In other words, he commanded that they should be admitted into the community of believers in the manner and with the accompaniments, then frequently used. This however brings us no nearer the conclusion, for the establishment of which the passage is usually cited. We are still left to inquire and to decide from other considerations, whether this practice constitutes a necessary appendage to the Christian religion, or belongs to the *exuviae* of the former dispensation.

The account of Philip baptising the eunuch of Ethiopia, (Acts viii. 38,) has no more efficiency than those already examined, in proving the baptism with water to be a permanent ordi-

nance of the Christian church. The interview of Philip and the eunuch, was effected in an extraordinary manner, manifestly showing its importance. But the conversion of the man to the Christian faith was the important object gained by the interview. It does not appear that Philip directed him to be baptized. The proposal was made by the eunuch himself. He had been at Jerusalem to worship and was reading the prophet Esaias. Hence it is manifest he was attached, if not actually a proselyte to the Jewish religion. His proposal to be baptised, is therefore to be attributed quite as much to his Jewish predilections, as to the preaching of Philip.

From the preceding observations, I think it may be safely inferred, that no evidence appears, either in the holy Scriptures, or in the arguments fairly deduced from them, that water baptism was ever introduced by divine authority, into the Christian system; and of consequence the supposition that this kind of baptism is a standing and perpetual ordinance in the Christian church, has no foundation in scripture or in correct reason.

It is freely admitted that the Apostles after our Lord's ascension did sometimes baptize their converts with water, but it is not admitted that this practice arose from any injunction of our Saviour, either when he gave them his final

instructions, or at any previous time. For this opinion we have two unanswerable reasons. No such injunction appears upon the records of the new Testament; and we do not find that the disciples ever professed to baptise with water, in obedience to his commands. In regard to preaching the gospel, the case is very different. When Peter and John were commanded not to speak at all, or teach in the name of Jesus they answered; "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts iv. 19, 20.) Paul also testified that necessity was laid upon him, yea woe was unto him, if he preached not the gospel. (1 Cor. ix. 16.) Under the circumstances then existing, the conduct of the apostles in relation to water baptism, admits of an easy and natural explanation without supposing that they apprehended our Saviour had ever commanded them to use it.

The ministry of the apostles began at Jerusalem, and was for a time confined to the Israelitish nation. Their principal mission was therefore not to draw the people from the observances of the law, in which they were strongly entrenched, nor from the ceremonies which had grown out of it, but to lead them to Christ, to establish an unwavering conviction of

the truths of the gospel, and to introduce the righteousness of Christianity. To qualify them for this work, it was not absolutely necessary that their understandings should, at first, be so far enlightened as to see that the dispensation of the law was finished by the coming of Christ. And we accordingly find, that long after the doctrines of the gospel had extended beyond the limits of Judea, some of the Jewish Christians taught the brethren at Antioch, that, except they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved. And Paul and Barnabas, after much disputation with them, found this so grave a question, that it was determined to lay the subject before the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. What arguments these teachers employed we are not informed. But it is easily perceived that one quite as plausible, in support of this doctrine, might be derived from our Saviour's own words, as any that have ever been adduced in defence of the perpetuation of water baptism. (Matthew v. 17—19.) When the subject came under consideration at Jerusalem, it appears this doctrine, which extended to the whole Mosaic law, had its advocates there, for we are told there was much disputing. (Acts xv. 7.) The conclusion to which the assembly at length came, may be justly considered as breaking the yoke of the Mosaic law, for the first time, from the necks

of the disciples; yet, even in this conclusion, we discern the relics of Jewish predilections. The injunction to abstain from things strangled and from blood, is manifestly founded on the precepts of Moses, (Lev. iii. 17; vii. 26; xvii. 10, 12, 14. Deut. xii. 16—23; xv. 23,) and no longer considered obligatory upon Christians.* As this assembly was convened to deliberate upon one of the most ancient and revered of the Jewish observances, and to decide whether it was obligatory upon Christians, it furnished a favourable opportunity of expressing the opinion of the apostles and elders, how far the disciples were bound to adhere to the ceremonies of the preceding dispensations. They accordingly gave a united judgment, sanctioned by the concurrence of the divine spirit. But in the judgment thus solemnly pronounced, there is no intimation that the baptism of their converts with water, was to be continued. Their silence on this subject is the more remarkable, as this would seem to have been the time to express it, if the assembly had considered the baptism with water as a part of the Christian system. They were about drawing a line between the requisitions of the old and

* It has been supposed, with considerable plausibility, that the injunction to abstain from things strangled and from blood, was given to avoid offence to the Jews dispersed among the Gentiles, who were in the practice of reading the law every Sabbath day.—See *Milner's Church History*, vol. i. 25.

the new dispensation, and had they understood the injunction of their Lord, expressed in the 28th and 19th of Matthew, to signify a baptizing with water, it is difficult to see how they could have failed to mention it. If, however, they understood that baptism to be with the spirit, there was no propriety in recurring to it in this place. They were treating of outward observances, and not of the gifts and graces of the spirit.

It is also a remarkable circumstance, that in the epistles which the apostles addressed to the disciples and strangers scattered throughout the world, the baptism with water is no where enjoined. This omission could hardly have occurred, had they understood it to be a perpetual ordinance in the Christian church. Although the apostles did, at times, baptize their converts with water, it is not certain that the practice was ever considered by them as essential, or that it was uniformly observed. For in the sermon which Peter preached on the occasion of the surprise excited by healing the cripple, no mention is made of baptizing them; yet a great number of the hearers believed in the truth of his doctrine. (Acts iv. 4.) In the great conversion at Antioch, where the disciples were first called Christians, and where Barnabas and Saul continued their labours for a year, we hear nothing of baptism. (Ib. xi. 26.)

Among the extensive labours of Paul for the conversion of the Gentiles we find a few, and only a few instances, in which he made use of water baptism. I am aware that the advocates of water baptism are apt to presume, that, where the scriptures are silent upon the subject, this baptism was used. To presume a fact, of which we have no information, and to make that presumption the basis of an important conclusion, is not correct reasoning. Presumptions, to be made the foundation of a rational conclusion, must be erected on strong probabilities. This baptism having been proved to belong to the former dispensations, we have more reason, when the sacred historians are silent on the subject, to presume that water was not used, than to suppose that it was. If the practice of baptizing the Gentile converts with water had ever been general among the primitive Christians, and especially if they had considered it as a necessary attendant upon conversion, it appears strange that we should not find the subject more frequently mentioned than we do.

The texts and arguments hitherto examined, show that the hypothesis which makes water baptism a perpetual ordinance in the church, is not founded upon scripture authority; and therefore those who decline its use, are not, on that account, chargeable with disrespect to the testimony of the holy scriptures.

But an important inquiry remains. Does the New Testament prove that water baptism is *not* a part of the dispensation of Christ? I answer in the affirmative. The scriptures not only fail to prove that it is, but actually show that it is not, a part of the Christian dispensation.

The prophet Ezekiel, speaking in the name of the Lord, gives us a very forcible description of the work and baptism of the gospel. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." (Chap. xxxvi. 25—27.)

It is to be remembered that our Lord describes his kingdom as a spiritual one. For he tells us the kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, lo here, or, lo there; for behold the kingdom of God is within you. (Luke xvii. 20, 21.) And the apostle testifies that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Rom. xiv. 17.) The great object of Christ's ministry on earth, was to turn

the attention of the people from outward and visible objects, to those which were inward and spiritual. Hence he reprov'd the Pharisees for observing the minutæ, but neglecting the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and faith. (Matt. xxiii. 23.) He admonished to purity of heart, to seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, to make clean the inside of the cup—not to labour for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life. He was accustomed to spiritualize on the various incidents that occurred, and to show that his kingdom was not of this world, nor the righteousness which he came to establish, an external and ceremonial, but a vital and permanent one. And the apostle Paul, when he saw that remarkable vision on his way to Damascus, was instructed that he was to be sent to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they might receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified *by faith in Christ*. (Acts xxvi. 18.) It is therefore obvious that an outward ceremony which cannot reach the heart, and which has no necessary connection with purity of life, would be an anomaly in such a system as this was designed to be.

Secondly. It is hardly conceivable that our

Lord, if he had intended that his disciples in all ages should submit to this rite, would never have administered it himself, or commanded others to administer it, in such terms as could not have been misunderstood. But we are told that Jesus himself baptized not, (John iv. 2 ;) and when he called his disciples to follow him, we have no intimation that he ever required them to be baptized. If any of them had been previously baptized, of which we indeed have no account, it could only have been with the baptism of John. If, therefore, baptizing with water, in his name, had been part of the Christian system, it must have been administered to them all, whether they had been subjected to John's baptism or not. As we have no account that those whom he immediately called to be his witnesses, ever were baptized with water in his name, or that he at any time commanded them to baptize others with water, it must be manifest that this baptism is no part of his dispensation. For we must remember that the charge mentioned in the twenty-eighth of Matthew, has been proved to relate to the baptism of the spirit, and not to that of water. The expression, 'he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,' as recorded in Mark, evidently relates to the same transaction as that of Matthew, being merely an abridgment of Matthew's

relation, and consequently alludes to the same spiritual baptism.

Thirdly. The apostle Paul, who was particularly commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, expressly disavows any commission to baptize with water. Though he was himself baptized, (Acts ix. 18,) and in some instances conformed to the usages of the preparatory dispensation by baptizing others, yet when he found that the Corinthian converts were falling into contention, and exalting the instruments of their conversion, he laboured to draw their attention from outward observances, to the unity of the faith. He then thanked God that he had baptized but few of them, explicitly declaring that Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. (1 Cor. i. 17.) As Paul was not behind the chiefest of the apostles, but laboured in the gospel among the Gentiles more extensively than any of his brethren, (Ib. xv. 10,) and had no commission to baptize with water, the conclusion is inevitable, that water baptism is no part of the dispensation which he was commissioned to proclaim. If further evidence was required, we have it in the passage before us. For why did the apostle thank God that he had baptized so few of them? He must have perceived that in doing so, he had not only acted without divine authority, but had assumed an office which he had better declined; that

this baptism was to the Corinthians not merely useless, but actually injurious. It had been, or at least was liable to be, made the occasion of imputing to him the presumption of baptizing in his own name. (Ib. i. 15.) When the apostles baptized their Jewish converts in the name of Jesus, the application of an old and familiar ceremony, to a new object, was a mode of leading them to Christianity, through the rituals of the law, very consonant with the condescension to the weakness of man, every where conspicuous in the divine dispensations. But when the gospel was preached to the Gentiles, who had not been accustomed to the ceremonies of the Jewish law, the enlightened mind of the apostle Paul soon perceived that the baptism with water, instead of leading them *to* Christ, had a tendency to direct their attention *from* the primary object of Christian faith. He therefore thanked God that he had baptized but few of them, plainly declaring that the ministry of the gospel, and not baptizing with water, was his proper business. This declaration also proves most conclusively, that baptizing with water is neither a part of, nor a necessary appendage to, the ministry of the gospel.

The same apostle in his epistle to the Ephesians, admonishing them to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, subjoins, in a few words, a general summary of Christian theology.

"There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. iv. 4—6.) The serious Christian will not need to be informed that this one essential baptism is that of Christ, the baptism which purifies the heart, and brings those who experience it into the unity of the spirit, and into fellowship with the Father and with the Son. This one essential baptism, the antitype, of which the washings under the law, and the baptism of John, were expressive figures, is testified of by the apostle Peter, as bringing salvation by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But beside informing us that the baptism which saves us, is the antitype* of the ark which saved the whole human race, then consisting of but eight persons, from the waters of the flood, he adds, as if apprehensive that his meaning might be misunderstood, and the baptism of water be mistaken for that to which he refers, "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." (1 Peter iii. 21.) This declaration is remarkable

* Our English translation of this passage is obscure and defective. The words, *the like figure whereunto*, ought to be, *the antitype whereof*; for the Greek *αντιτυπων* signifies an antitype, not a figure. The arguments in favour of water baptism, however, gain nothing by the adoption of the common translation.

for its fulness and force. As the washings prescribed by Moses, and the baptism of John did put away the filth of the flesh, the apostle informs us negatively that this is not the true saving baptism of the Christian religion. But inasmuch as the baptism of Christ, with his own blessed spirit, rectifies the heart, and cleanses from the pollutions of sin, and thereby produces the answer of a good conscience toward God, he tells us affirmatively, that this is the baptism which brings life and salvation.

Lastly. In all those places of the New Testament where the baptism of Christ is mentioned, we find no intimation of that weak and forlorn opinion, which some moderns have advanced, that the baptism of water and that of the spirit, make up the baptism of Christ. The baptism with water, and that with the spirit, are nowhere mentioned together except by way of contrast, or as type and antitype; the one as present or past, the other as yet to come; the one as preparatory and decreasing, the other as increasing and permanent. "I indeed *baptize* you with water unto repentance, but he *shall baptize* you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (Matt. iii. 11.) "I indeed *have baptized* you with water, but he *shall baptize* you with the Holy Ghost." (Mark i. 8.) "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed *baptized* with water, but ye *shall be*

baptized with the Holy Ghost." (Acts xi. 16.) "That he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." (John i. 31. 33.) "He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the spirit descending and remaining upon him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. I am not the Christ, but am sent before him. He must increase, but I must decrease." (Ib. iii. 28. 30.) Hence it is evident that these baptisms are spoken of as separate and distinct, in their offices, as well as their nature. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, speaks of the doctrine of baptisms in the plural number. We also find they were not dependent upon each other as cause and effect; for we read that great multitudes, among whom were many of the Pharisees and Sadducees, came to John's baptism, of whom we have no reason to suppose that they all, or even that many of them, ever experienced the baptism of the spirit. (Matt. iii. 7.) The family of Cornelius were baptized with the spirit before they were baptized with water. (Acts x. 44.) The disciples whom Paul found at Ephesus had been baptized with water, and yet had not even heard of the Holy Ghost. (Ib. xix. 2, 3.) And Simon Magus, though baptized with water, does not appear to have been baptized with the spirit at all, (Ib. viii. 13, 20, 21;) and there is

no intimation in the scriptures that the baptism with water is necessary in order to render the baptism of the spirit complete and effectual; or that the immersion of the body in water can purge the conscience or take away the sins of the soul.

If we reflect, as every professor of Christianity ought seriously to do, upon the nature and design of the Christian religion, upon the transcendent character of its founder, and the purity and spirituality of his dispensation, we can scarcely fail to perceive, that to load it with any of the ceremonies of the preceding dispensations, is to cloud its lustre and tarnish its beauty.

The transient character of the former dispensations, and the permanence of that which our Lord introduced, are beautifully represented in the vision which three of the disciples saw in the holy mount. For they saw Moses, the minister of the law, and Elias, by which appellation John the Baptist is frequently designated, talking with Jesus. These appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. (Matthew xvii. 1—5. Mark ix. 2—8. Luke ix. 28—36.) The law of Moses, and the ministry of John, were glorious in their day, and pointed to Christ and his dispensation, as their completion. Peter was desirous of remaining where they then

were, and proposed to make three tabernacles, one for their Master, one for Moses, and one for Elias. And he and the other disciples appear to have retained a corresponding inclination for some time after our Lord's ascension. They were for maintaining the law and the baptism of John, along with the religion of Christ. They proposed to place the tabernacles of Moses and Elias by the side of his. But while he spake, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, which said, "this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased; *hear ye him.*" And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. Moses and Elias had passed away, but the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, the author and minister of the new covenant, remained; and remained alone.

From what has been advanced, I consider the position to be fully proved, that baptism with water, even as used by the apostles, is not a standing ordinance in the Christian church, and therefore not obligatory on Christians.

It has sometimes been to me a subject of surprise, that those Christian professors who hold water baptism to be an abiding ordinance of the church, do not more generally consider themselves bound to adhere, with greater tenacity, to the authority which they profess to follow. If they plead the example of the primitive Chris-

tians, or rather of those among them who made use of water baptism, as obligatory upon those of the present day, it would seem to be a necessary conclusion that the example should be strictly and literally followed. Now we may observe that the word βαπτίζω, in its proper signification, implies to dip or immerse, and hence baptism properly signifies immersion. From the account already given of the Jewish baptism, and that of John, it appears that their converts were immersed in water. And in the narrations of the baptisms of John and the primitive Christians, given in the New Testament, wherever the description is sufficiently minute to authorize a conclusion as to the *manner* in which they were performed, we find they went into the water. In the beginning of Matthew, where John's baptism is first mentioned, we read that they were baptized of him *in Jordan*. (Chap. iii. 6.) And when Jesus was baptized, he went up straightway *out of the water*. (Ib. verse 16.) Mark relates these circumstances in nearly the same words. (Chap. i. 5, 10.) When Philip baptized the eunuch, they both went *into the water*. (Acts viii. 38.) John was baptizing in Enon near to Salim, because there was much water there. (John iii. 23.) In these cases, the natural and necessary conclusion is, that immersion was used. Hence it is obvious that sprinkling with water, the practice now gene-

rally followed by those who profess to baptize, is a deviation from the primitive baptism, and for which not a shadow of authority can be adduced by the practice of the Christian church.

I am aware that it has been said, that βαπτω, from which βαπτίζω was derived, may signify to wash, and that washing can be performed by affusion as well as immersion. It is needless to dispute, in this case, about the meaning of these Greek verbs, for the argument, allowing its utmost force, brings us no nearer the conclusion which was intended to be drawn from it.

In the first place, it does not appear that the primitive Christians ever professed to baptize by affusion. Whether the word baptize, was ambiguous or not, there is no evidence of any diversity among them in regard to its application.

In the next place, if we will have baptize to signify *to wash*, let it be so applied. When the children of Israel were commanded to *wash* their clothes, the command was to be literally obeyed. A few drops of water applied to them by sprinkling or contact would not have constituted the washing required. And whether we construe baptism to signify immersion or washing, as sprinkling is neither the one nor the other, it cannot signify baptism. As far as I have been able to discover, the early Christians, when they made use of water baptism, retained

the primitive mode of immersion. The substitute now generally used appears to have been introduced in the third century.

From the writings of the Christian fathers which have reached us, it is manifest that many superstitious opinions by that time were admitted among them. As the life and power of Christianity declined, and the baptism of the spirit was but little known, a high degree of importance was attached to the baptism of water. The effects of the real Christian baptism, as described in the works of the apostles, came to be attributed to the external ceremony. Through baptismal water, says Ambrose, men pass from earth to heaven. Whence, says Augustin, hath water so much virtue, as that it touches the body, and washes the heart? As water, says Algerius, extinguisheth, cleanseth and whiteneth above other liquors; so in baptismal water, fleshly lusts are quenched, sin, both original and actual, washed away, and innocence begotten. The Council of Florence taught, that by baptism we are spiritually born again; and that it imprints in the soul a character, that is some spiritual sign indelible, which cannot be blotted out. And further that we are thereby made members of Christ, of the body of the church.

The Council of Trent taught, that by bap-

tism we put on Christ, and are thoroughly made new creatures.*

Hence we perceive, that in the early ages of Christianity, and, through succeeding periods, to modern times, a degree of importance was attached to the baptism of water which belongs only to the baptism of Christ, the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Out of these opinions naturally grew another, viz. that inasmuch as a relapsed Christian was in a worse condition than an infidel, it was best to defer the purifying operation of baptism until near the close of life. Hence it was often delayed till sickness or age gave clear indications of approaching dissolution. To persons thus situated, the usual mode of baptizing by immersion, was evidently difficult and dangerous. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, being asked what was to be done in such cases, answered, that seeing they could not do it as they ought, without endangering the life of the patient, they must do it as well as they could. They might therefore apply the element of water, by sprinkling it upon them in their beds; alleging Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you;" observing, rather philosophically, that the virtue of baptism ought not to be estimated, in a carnal manner, by the quantity of external apparatus; yet in

* Lawson on Baptism, p. 73.

case the patients were afterwards restored, he advised that they should be dipped in a river.* This, we observe, was about the middle of the third century. Musculus observes, that, anciently, very many deferred their baptism to the utmost term of life, to the end they might depart pure and blameless out of the world; and so they did not suffer themselves to be baptized, except in their beds, and that by sprinkling only, in the very point of death, that they might die with an evidence. In this manner Constantine, the son of Helena, a zealous professor, was baptized when he was sixty-five years old, being then sick, and died a few days afterwards. Basil, bishop of Cesarea, though born of believing parents, his father being a bishop, was not baptized till he was aged.

As the practice of sprinkling instead of immersion, was first used in condescension to the sick and weak, this application of water was, for a time, considered as an imperfect baptism, so that those who had been sprinkled and not dipped, were not admitted into any office in the church.† But in the first ages of Christianity baptism was not applied to any but those who were supposed to be sufficiently instructed in the doctrines of the gospel. Consequently the baptism of infants was not then used. The

* Ibid. 75. † Barclay's Apology, 440.

earliest account on record, as far as I can discover, of infant baptism, is about the middle of the third century. A council was held in Africa, by sixty-six bishops, with Cyprian at their head, in the year 253, in which the question of the time when baptism ought to be administered was discussed. It appears that an opinion was advanced by some Christian professors, that as the Jews were required to circumcise their children on the eighth day after birth, the children of Christian parents ought to be baptized at the same age. And one subject of examination with this council was, whether the eighth day, or an earlier one, ought to be adopted. Fidus, an African bishop, appears to have advocated the Jewish age; Cyprian informed him that the council were of a different opinion. And the reason of that opinion, plainly indicates the ground of the practice itself. "We all judged that the mercy and grace of God should be denied to none. For if the Lord says in his gospel, the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them, how ought we to do our utmost, as far as in us lies, *that no soul be lost*. Spiritual circumcision ought not to be impeded by carnal circumcision. If even to the foulest offenders, when they afterwards believe, remission of sins is granted, and none is prohibited from baptism and grace, how much more should an infant be admitted, who

just born hath not sinned in any respect, except that being carnally produced, according to Adam, he hath, in this first birth, contracted the contagion of the ancient deadly nature; and who obtains the remission of sins with the less difficulty, because not his own actual guilt, but that of another, is to be remitted.*

In this decision we may perceive two doctrinal points clearly admitted; on which indeed the decision itself was evidently founded. That children from their birth are sinners in consequence of the transgression of our first parents; and that sins are remitted by the baptism of water. When the bishops had embraced these opinions, it is not wonderful that they should advise the early baptism of infants.

This doctrine of original sin, came afterwards to hold a conspicuous place among the opinions of Christian professors. Augustine, who lived in the fifth century, gave his judgment that infants, dying without being baptized, were lost, because they were guilty of original sin.† The Milevitan Council held in 402, adopted the following canon: "It is our will, that all who affirm that young children have everlasting life, who are not baptized to the taking away of original sin, that they be anathematized." And the fifth Carthaginian Council, held 416, adopted

* Milner's Church History, vol. i. p. 320. † Lawson, 84.

the subsequent: "We will, that whosoever denieth that little children by baptism are freed from perdition, and eternally saved, that they be accursed."*

Hence we perceive that the practice of infant baptism owed its extension and permanence, if not its origin, to the opinion, that children are, from their birth, deemed offenders in the sight of a just and merciful Creator, in consequence of the transgression of our first parents.†

This doctrine of original sin being once embraced, and the efficacy of water baptism to purge away sins, both original and actual, being also admitted, it was to be expected that the expedient of Cyprian would be frequently adopted, particularly in regard to infants and persons labouring under disease.

Rantism, or sprinkling, thus gradually superseded the ancient baptism. To such superstitious extent was the importance of infant baptism carried, that children were sometimes taken out of their graves, and sprinkled with water; others were baptized by proxy, in imitation of the

* T. Story, 609, from D'Anvers, p. 105.

† It is no part of my object in this essay to examine how far or in what manner the posterity of Adam are affected by his transgression. It is sufficient for my present purpose to observe, that I most unequivocally assent to the apostolic declaration, that sin is not imputed where there is no law; and that consequently infants are not guilty in the sight of God, until they have actually transgressed his law.

ancient baptism for the dead. This baptism for the dead was effected in the following manner. A person placed himself under the bed of the deceased; and upon the question being put to the dead, whether he would be baptized, the one under the bed gave answer in the affirmative. He then was baptized in place of the deceased. A procedure, as Godwin justly observes, fitly compared to acting on the stage.*

Although the practice of being baptized or sprinkled by proxy, is probably now unknown, yet we have another which closely resembles it. When infants are sprinkled, or christened, as it is usually termed, and parents or others act as god-fathers or god-mothers, and enter into engagements on their behalf, such as they could not, without divine assistance, possibly perform, if made for themselves, they are attempting to perform by proxy the most momentous part of the proceeding.

From this brief notice of the history of Rantism, it is, I think, sufficiently obvious that the practice now generally prevalent among the professors of Christianity, is one which has arisen since the apostolic age, and was totally unknown when the New Testament was written. Hence those who urge the precepts or practice of our Lord or his apostles, in support

* Lawson, 102. Phipps, 16.

of water baptism, and yet use the substitute which Cyprian introduced, are actually pleading for one thing and practising another. If the continuance of water baptism, as an ordinance of the Christian church, could be maintained from scripture authority, it would necessarily follow that Christians in general were in the neglect of an ordinance of Christ. For we need not spend much time in the inquiry whether the arguments, such as they are, in favour of water baptism, professedly deduced from the precepts or practice of our Lord and his apostles, are applicable to the baptism then known and used, or to one introduced more than two centuries after our Saviour's crucifixion. At the present time I believe a small minority of those who profess the Christian name, practice the real ancient baptism in water.

It is also observable, that the apostolic practice, as far as we can discover from their history, bore a striking resemblance to that of the Jews. They baptized their converts; theirs was a baptism of conversion. The modern substitute is not only a deviation in manner, sprinkling instead of immersion, but a total change in regard to the subjects of it. Infants, not adults, are now most commonly subjected to this process.

To those who believe that no obligation rests upon us to use water in any of its modes of

application, it must be of little importance what method approximates most nearly to the primitive practice. But we may deduce a conclusion from the facts just stated, which to those who are governed by authority, may appear neither trivial nor unimportant. We have the authority of nearly all the Christian world, for declining the use of water baptism. For if Christians of the present day judge themselves at liberty to discontinue the use of the only species of water baptism known or practiced during the apostolic age, and to adopt a substitute of human invention, the precepts and practice of Christ and his apostles are thrown out of the question. The point at issue between us and the professors of Christianity in general, is not whether we are required to use the baptism of the apostolic age, for on that point we appear to be generally agreed, but whether the Rantism of Cyprian and the Roman church constitutes a necessary part of the Christian religion.

The question is not therefore a scriptural one, but one of tradition and the authority of the middle ages. And surely those Christians who consider the scriptures as the primary rule of faith and practice, will hardly unchristianize a society for rejecting the authority of the popes and councils of the middle ages.

It is obvious, that under the dispensations

which preceded the advent of the Messiah, the visible worship was attended with numerous ceremonies, which gave it a character more marked with outward action than with any operation of the mind. The observance of these ceremonies was strictly enjoined, and their number and order, under the Mosaic law, minutely described. But our Saviour taught the necessity and importance of a more spiritual worship. This is particularly illustrated in his conversation with the woman at Jacob's well. When she wished to be informed whether Jerusalem, where the Jewish temple was erected, or Mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans had erected a rival temple, was the place where men ought to worship, he plainly told her, that long contested point was no longer a subject of importance. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 20—24.)

In the instructive discourse which he had with his disciples, a short time before his crucifixion, he clearly and forcibly inculcated the spiritual nature of the communion which was to exist between him and them; showing conclusively that his religion was not a system of

outward observances, but of an inward and spiritual life. The great object, indeed, of the ministry of our Lord and his apostles, was to establish a spiritual religion; a spiritual worship; a spiritual baptism. Our Lord himself is the door through which alone entrance is obtained into the fold of everlasting rest. (Ibid. chap. xiv. and xv.)

The one true Christian baptism is that of the spirit, the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. To be really and truly baptized into the name of Christ, is to be brought into fellowship with the Father, and with the Son. For as many as are baptized into Christ have put on Christ; and to put on Christ is to be governed by his spirit and conformed to his life. This is the baptism which purifies the heart, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He therefore that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.





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